launched by the oil companies both on their own and also under direction of Government from time to time to check malpractices. To prevent adulteration various steps like blue dyeing of kerosene (PDS), furfural doping, filter paper test, stock reconciliation, checking of retail outlets by mobile laboratories, etc. are taken by oil companies.

**IOC offer to buy equity of IPCL**

97. SHRI V. N. GADGIL: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether IOC offered to buy 25 percent of equity of IPCL at the price mentioned by Government; and

(b) why the offer was rejected?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) and (b) There was no offer from IOC to buy 25% equity of IPCL at the price mentioned by the Government. However, IOC had only indicated its expression of interest to bid for the equity in IPCL.

**Exemption of customs duty for exploration operations**

98. SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any decision to exempt the oil PSU's from customs duty for exploration operations;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government are giving any incentive to the private sector in this regard; and

(d) if so, whether the same is extended to the PSU's also?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) and (b) As per Customs Notification No. 20/